**Wizard Lake Boating Focus Group**

**Report to Council**

**July 2011**

**Background**

In 2011, as response to a request by local residents, Leduc County Council approved the appointment of a Wizard Lake Boating Focus Group. This committee, representing both lake residents and users, gathered onfive occasions to compile information and provide feedback to Leduc County Council. Their intent was to improve boating activities on Wizard Lake, thereby assisting the long term sustainability of the Lake.

The follow are members of the Wizard Lake Boating Focus Group who volunteered their time to assist in the identification of actions that will aid in the protection and improved boating safety on Wizard Lake.

Richard Rivard

Chris Daniel, representing the Wizard Lake Watershed and Lake Stewardship Association

Josh Huber

Archie Roberts

LeVerne Ellsworth

Gilbert Magnan

Bob Trueman, representing the Wizard Lake Water-ski Club

Betty Glassman, Leduc County Council

Larry McKeever, Wetaskiwin County Council

The committee would like to acknowledge the involvement, participation and support of Larry McKeever, Councilor for Wetaskiwin County and Betty Glassman, Councilor for Leduc County in this focus group. It is extremely important that both Leduc and Wetaskiwin County’s work together to ensure long term sustainability and health of Wizard Lake.

The committee would also like to recognize that currently Wizard Lake can become overpopulated with boats on certain days and that this usage is not sustainable for the long term health of the lake and is a high risk contributor to the safety of lake users.

In lieu of compensation to the focus group, Leduc County Council offered to make a donation to a local organization with interest in protecting Wizard Lake. The focus group would like to see this donation be given to the Wizard Lake Watershed and Lake Stewardship Association towards their efforts of completing the “The State of the Watershed report on Wizard Lake” to be completed this fall.

Meeting notes have been recorded for each meeting and are attached to this report. This summary was prepared by Parks and Recreation staff but has been developed, reviewed and approved by the focus group for presentation to Council.

**What Leduc County is doing well and should continue.**

1. In 2010 Leduc County expanded their boat launch enforcement by providing Leduc County Peace Officers at the gate during busy days. This practice had a positive impact on preventing boaters who were not in compliance of boating regulations. It is recommended by this focus group that this practice continue and be expanded to ensure that coverage is provided on all busy boating days.

**Recommendation for implementation.**

It was identified that as rates increase at the Jubilee boat launch more pressure will be placed on the Leduc County West boat launch. There is currently no structured parking at this location as boater’s park along the road side. As a result two recommendations have been provided to ensure that this launch remains available for local residents, but ensures safety of travelers and that increase pressures on this launch do not continue.

1. **Implement parking restrictions at the West Boat Launch along the roadside. It is suggested that parking be permitted along one side of the road only to ensure that two way traffic is possible. It is also suggested that parking not be allowed near the top of both the North and East roads to reduce the possibility of collisions.**
2. **Ensure that enforcement patrols are provided at the West Launch to ensure that all regulations and safe boating practices are enforced at both Leduc County lake access locations.**

It is recognized by the committee that Leduc County has committed staff to the boat launch on busy days to assist with enforcement of boating regulations. Leduc County has also purchased a boat for enforcement on the water and has received authorization to enforce federal boating regulations.

1. **That Leduc County continues to provide enforcement on the water but enable officers to establish a relationship with users to educate, caution and enforce safe boating regulations, creating an environment of mutual respect and co-operation that enhances the safety and enjoyment for all users. The education of boaters on minor violations will be important to consider. It is recommended that Leduc County continue to practice of issuing “Small Vessel requirement deficiency reports” to educate boaters of regulations.**
2. **That Leduc County ensures that enforcement of the Jubilee Park internal boat launch is consistent with efforts of the day use area.**

Parks and Recreation has provided signage at both the Jubilee and West boat launches. This signage is intended to inform guests of the speed limits on the lake as well as ability for Leduc County to deny access to boaters not in compliance. The boating focus group has also identified an area of the lake, which requires additional signage. The area identified as the narrows creates a risk to boaters due to its narrow passage.

1. **That Leduc County provides signage to inform boaters of the hazards and possible boating congestion at the narrows. Signage should be located at each launch as well as on the water where possible.**
2. **Leduc County Peace Officers while patrolling Wizard Lake assist in educating boaters of the hazards and dangerous conditions at the narrows.**

The committee recognizes the importance of this focus group and the positive benefits that it can have on the future of Wizard lake boating safety. The committee believes that it is important for Leduc County to measure the success of this endeavor and continue to engage citizens in future decisions relating to boating safety.

1. **That Leduc County engages the Wizard Lake Boating Focus Group this fall 2011 and each spring on an annual basis to review operations and enforcement practices.**
2. **That Leduc County continues to work to educate and inform residents and users of Wizard Lake on safe boating practices as well and policy changes which may impact boating.**

It was identified that the redevelopment of the Jubilee Park Day use area in 2005 was a contributor to the increased activities and usage of boats on Wizard Lake. With the redevelopment and increased pressures on the parking area, an overflow parking area was established north of Jubilee Park. The corresponding impact of this overflow is increased pressure from boats on the lake.

1. **It is recommended that Leduc County close the overflow to ensure that boats launched at Jubilee Park can be managed.**
2. **That Council reviews the rates for boats, both day and seasonal, and considers increases.**

The committee also recognizes that closing of the overflow parking area in the future may impact potential users of the lake. This closure may impact other boat launches located around the lake.

The focus group recognizes and has acknowledged the participation of both Leduc County and Wetaskiwin County in this focus group. The success and future sustainability of Wizard Lake will require the continued long term cooperation and partnership of Leduc and Wetaskiwin Counties.

1. **That Leduc County Council provide this report and corresponding decisions to the County of Wetaskiwin and continue to engage them as a partner in continuing to identify effective solutions towards the protection, sustainability and safety of Wizard Lake.**

These eleven recommendations have been provided to Leduc County Council for consideration and implementation. The focus group has also identified another 6 items for future consideration. It is encouraged that Leduc County consider these points for review in efforts to further protect Wizard Lake.

**Future Considerations:**

1. Review of West End slow zone to determine its relevance and effect on safe boating.
2. Consider impacts of wake boats in the West End slow zone
3. Conduct a review of other areas of Canada that have regulations that may benefit Wizard Lake.
4. Educate the public on Dock Safety, regulations, authorizations
5. Review methods to improve enforcement of litter on and off the water.
6. Continue to review the operations of the internal boat launch at Jubilee park

**Conclusion:**

The Wizard Lake Boating Focus Group would like to thank Leduc County Council for leading this review of boating and related activities on Wizard Lake. We feel that it was a beneficial first step in identifying community concerns and alternatives to improve the lake for all users.